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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# Intelligence Memorandum

*Developments in Sino-Soviet Relations*

NRO REVIEW  
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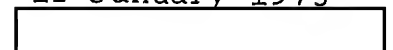


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Central Intelligence Agency  
Directorate of Intelligence  
12 January 1973

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Developments in Sino-Soviet Relations

Relations between Moscow and Peking have sunk to their lowest point since open fighting broke out on the frontier in 1969. Faced with China's apparently inexorable political offensive, the Soviet leaders seem to have concluded that there is little point in turning the other cheek. They have responded in kind, saying things they had not brought up since the border talks began.

There have been rumors of minor incidents along the frontier, but both sides are still determined to avoid an outbreak of serious fighting. Trade continues at a modest level, and the recent increase in political tension has not been accompanied by any unusual military moves.

*Note: This memorandum is one in a series of reports on Sino-Soviet relations. It was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence, with contributions from the Office of Strategic Research and the Office of Economic Research.*

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Soviets Take Off the Gloves

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Over the past few weeks the Soviets have raised their polemics against China to the top leadership level. On two recent occasions--in Budapest on 30 November and at the USSR's 50th anniversary celebration on 21 December--General Secretary Brezhnev condemned the Chinese with unusual stridency. His criticism was by far the harshest he has made since the Sino-Soviet border talks began more than three years ago.

The Soviet party chief's speech in Hungary showed how much the Kremlin is smarting from China's diplomatic and propaganda offensive against the Soviet Union. Homing in on what seems to hurt most, Brezhnev denounced as "absurd" Peking's allegations that the USSR is preparing to attack China. He charged that the Chinese do not "seriously believe" this themselves. His remarks were largely a reaction to Peking's attacks on the Soviet non-use-of-force proposal at the UN and Chinese efforts to focus attention on Soviet military strength along the Sino-Soviet border as proof of Soviet "hypocrisy." The day before Brezhnev spoke, China's ambassador at the UN, Huang Hua, had produced a particularly florid variation on this theme. Branding the Soviet proposal a fraud, Huang claimed that although the Soviets have "honey on their lips," they harbor "murderous intent behind their smiles."

The Chinese sent no delegation to the Soviet Union's anniversary celebration, but they were far from forgotten. In his keynote address, Brezhnev lashed out against what he called Chinese efforts "to do the greatest possible damage to the USSR." He again derided Peking's allegations of a Soviet threat to China. In an effort to prove that the Soviets have gone the last mile in trying to smooth relations, he revealed a few details of Moscow's proposal for a bilateral treaty renouncing the use of force. Brezhnev claimed that on 15 January 1971

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the Soviets gave the Chinese a draft treaty banning the use of military force, specifically including conventional, missile, and nuclear arms, but that Peking had rejected it.

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There was nothing in Brezhnev's recent remarks to indicate that the Soviets expect any forward movement soon on the issues dividing the two countries. The tone of his anniversary speech was implacable. For the first time in recent memory, he avoided the usual bromide that the Soviets would continue their efforts to normalize relations with China. In an even more significant departure from past practice, Brezhnev brought up the sensitive frontier question and denounced Peking's claims to Soviet soil as "absurd."

The Frontier: Not Completely Quiet

Brezhnev's remarks on the frontier dispute have been accompanied by rumors of fresh trouble on the border and signs of continuing difficulties at the talks in Peking. Two days before Brezhnev spoke, the Soviets chose to publish an account of a border skirmish in late 1971, during which one Soviet border guard was apparently killed. This is the first time since the fighting of 1969 that the USSR has given official publicity to such an incident. There is no other information on it.

Earlier last month, the Western press carried reports that in late November Chinese intruders crossed into Kazakhstan and killed more than five Soviets. The information was said to have come from an official Soviet document. In response to questions from newsmen, however, a Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman disclaimed any knowledge of the incident. Chinese officials dismissed the press accounts as groundless and "sheer malicious fabrication." The Chinese probably suspect--and with good reason--that by leaking such stories Moscow wants not only to disparage China, but to keep it off balance and worried about Soviet intentions. Sporadic, officially inspired rumors of Chinese border violations have not been confirmed in the past, and there is no hard evidence of recent trouble in that border area.

The information made available to the foreign press in Moscow, however, was unusually specific and detailed, which suggests it may have some basis in fact. For example, one of the alleged intruders was said to have been captured and later disowned as a "bandit" by the Chinese. The Soviets could choose to produce him and propagandize his capture at some later date if public recriminations on border troubles break out again. In any case, the absence of authoritative word on the incident from Moscow suggests that, whatever may have taken place in Kazakhstan, the Soviets did not deem it a serious provocation planned by Peking. When fighting broke out on the border in 1969, Moscow was quick to publicize its case, and charges and countercharges were traded in the open.

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Given the history of trouble along the lengthy frontier, minor incidents can occur at any time, and the potential for escalation always exists. There has been no sign from any source, however, of any recent major clashes anywhere along the border, and the bulk of the evidence suggests that both sides want to avoid renewed fighting. The head of a division in the Soviet Foreign Ministry, N. M. Lunkov, told [redacted] that there had been no serious trouble on the frontier for three years. He conceded there had been small incidents, but said that these usually involved people who crossed the border without intending to engage in hostilities.

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Lunkov credited the border negotiations in Peking with helping to prevent more serious confrontations. In this sense, he said, the talks had helped bring about a somewhat more relaxed atmosphere between the two countries. With unusual candor, he added that this was "about all there was to show for the negotiations."

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K1 The following vignette [redacted] describes a Soviet and East European walkout from a reception [redacted] after the Chinese foreign minister had made a routine remark about "social imperialism."

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*"...the group known here as Tolstikov and the Seven Dwarfs duly walked out followed by their minions. The Hungarian military attache, however, who was clearly enjoying himself over a glass of champagne, was seen not to move. An aide was dispatched to tap him on the shoulder and point out to him that his masters had walked out, but when the aide approached, the Hungarian turned to him and said in a loud voice, "I am not a social imperialist; my country has not invaded anybody else's; I am staying." However, this bold display of independence was short-lived; when the aide had failed to move him, a somewhat heavier gentleman was sent toward him, and the Hungarian was seen to move with alacrity from the hall."*

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Soviets Tighten Up In Peking

The Soviets have been trying to improve the performance of their embassy in China and to tighten their control over East European diplomats there,

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Manifestations of closer cooperation between Soviet and East European diplomats have already been seen. For example, East Europeans have joined their Soviet counterparts in walking out from Chinese speeches at the slightest provocation. This is symptomatic of a larger and more serious Soviet effort to line up the East Europeans squarely behind Moscow in the dispute with China. That Brezhnev chose to condemn Peking with unusual harshness during his speech in Hungary was no accident. He went out of his way to note "with satisfaction" that Hungary and other Socialist countries "fully agree" with Moscow's China policy--a passage intended primarily for East European ears. At the Soviet anniversary celebrations last month, most of the East European party chiefs followed Brezhnev's lead in criticizing Peking.

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New Year, Old Hostility

Most of Peking's recent propaganda has not zeroed in on Moscow to the degree it did in October and November, when it reached a pitch not seen since the border clashes of 1969. Chinese leaders seemed to be sitting back and monitoring Moscow's response to their earlier offensive.

Peking's basic concerns have not changed. Although China's New Year's day editorial devoted very little attention to foreign affairs, it did take a swipe at "Soviet revisionism" for having "further exposed itself as social imperialism before the people of the world." Of more interest was the inclusion of a new instruction from Chairman Mao to "dig tunnels deep, store grain everywhere, and never seek hegemony" and a reiteration of Mao's "be-prepared-for-war" line. In the same vein, foreign visitors over the past few months have been shown the extensive air raid tunnels being constructed by the Chinese with the obvious intention of demonstrating China's vigilance against the Soviet Union.

The old hostility was also clearly evident in a New China News Agency feature story of early January. Stung by reports in the Soviet press that China was engaging in the opium traffic, NCNA vehemently denied these "fantastic rumors" and charged that "the Soviet revisionist clique has resorted to every base and despicable trick to damage China's prestige." In the course of this diatribe, Peking quoted Nelson Gross, US special coordinator for narcotics, to bolster its case. This is the first time US officials have been quoted in this context and perhaps is an indication the Chinese recognize the sensitivity Washington attaches to the drug problem.

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Yankee Don't Go Home

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The step-up in the Sino-Soviet rivalry has produced a radical shift in the attitude of both countries toward the US military presence in Asia. For opposite reasons, the USSR and China have come to see advantages in a continued US presence there, and each has become more open in revealing its views in private conversations with foreigners.

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[REDACTED] The Chinese have also told recent visitors that the US military presence elsewhere in Asia does not unduly trouble them.

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[REDACTED] A Soviet official in Western Europe voiced the same concern and called possible US disengagement from the Far East "unwise and incomprehensible."

Talks on River Navigation Under Way

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[REDACTED] These annual talks normally deal with technicalities such as dredging border rivers and maintaining navigation markers. At the conclusion of the commission's 17th regular meeting, which ran from 6 December 1971 to 21 March 1972, Peking publicly announced that no agreement had been reached on substantive issues,

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but that both sides had agreed to hold the 18th session in China. Prospects for significant progress are no better this year.

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#### Economic Relations

Chinese purchases of Soviet aircraft and electric power equipment highlight the modest improvement in Sino-Soviet trade relations over the past year and a half. Although the Chinese rely on the West to supply most of the high-performance aircraft for anticipated international commercial operations, they are buying some passenger planes from the USSR for both domestic and selected international routes. China has taken delivery of at least eight short-range turboprop AN-24s from the USSR [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] China has also purchased six long-range IL-62s worth about \$42 million, but is reportedly dissatisfied with them and probably will buy no more. The Chinese have received the 15 MI-8, heavy-duty helicopters they bought for \$30 million; these will probably be apportioned between the Chinese Air Force and civil air fleet.

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About half of the \$150 million China spent abroad for power plants in the past year or so went to the USSR. China is also looking to the West for power plants and is negotiating for some very large ones from Japan and France. The USSR will probably continue to be an important supplier, however, because of its expertise in the field and the compatability of its equipment with that already in China.

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